

The Fourth Sunday of Lent [A]—March 26, 2017

BY FR. THOMAS HOISINGTON

Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032617.cfm>
1 SM 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A; PS 23: 1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6; EPH 5:8-14; JN 9:1-41

“He guides me in right paths for His Name’s sake.”

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is popularly called “Good Shepherd Sunday”. Every year on that Sunday, the Gospel passage is taken from the tenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel account, where Jesus describes Himself at length as “the good shepherd” and even as “the gate for the sheep”. But today, on this Fourth Sunday of Lent, we also hear about the Good Shepherd, though from the Old Testament rather than the New. Today’s Responsorial Psalm is the most beloved song of the Psalter: the 23rd Psalm.

At first hearing, it might not seem that this psalm connects with the other three Scripture passages proclaimed today. True, in today’s First Reading, the young man, David, is described as “tending the sheep”, and is plucked from this role to be anointed the king—that is, the shepherd—of God’s People. But for the most part, today’s Scripture passages focus on another theme: blindness.

Nonetheless, we should never underestimate the depth of Sacred Scripture. If we look closely, we might be able to see a connection between these two Lenten themes: our divine Lord as Shepherd, and

our blindness as sinners. This connection might help us to confess our blindness more willingly, and profess our willingness to follow the Good Shepherd.

Today’s First Reading is a good place to start looking for this connection. In fact, the First Reading focuses on both themes. Yet, the passage concludes with the anointing of David as Israel’s king, so surely this theme of the shepherd/king is the passage’s chief point?

Well, consider something that happens earlier in the passage. Samuel seeks the Lord’s anointed from among the sons of Jesse, and he does find him, but it takes eight tries to do so. What is it that hinders Samuel’s search? It is his faulty sight.

Samuel judges wrongly because he is blind to the truth of what God’s shepherd looks like. The Lord explains this to Samuel as plainly as possible, saying: “Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart.” This blindness that the Lord exposes lies at the root of all our sins. This blindness can take many forms. But the Lord here is not just condemning the shallow outlook so common today, which believes that beauty is only skin deep, and that only what our

senses perceive truly exists.

The Lord here in our First Reading is condemning something more specific: the blindness that keeps us from seeing our shepherd. Samuel judges wrongly because he sees only the appearance, and looks for a man’s lofty stature, instead of looking into his heart. But this blindness takes on an even more tragic form in today’s Gospel passage.

In fact, we see two types of blindness in this Gospel passage. But the second is far worse than the first. The first is more apparent because it is a physical blindness, which naturally is hard to hide. So the man blind from birth leads the narrative.

This man, born blind, is the object of the disciples’ accusations. They don’t ask if the man’s blindness was caused by sin. They presume this, asking instead whose sins caused his blindness. Jesus has to clarify the matter by explaining that “[n]either he nor his parents sinned”. Rather, “it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him” that the man was born blind. These “works of God” are the works of the Good Shepherd.

After He works the miracle of giving sight to the man born blind, Jesus faces accusations from those who cannot see Him as the Good Shepherd. The Pharisees say of Jesus: “This man is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath.” Others command the man given sight: “Give God the praise! We know that this

man {Jesus} is a sinner.”

But as Jesus’ enemies scorn Him, the man given sight speaks more boldly. At first he only reports the facts of what Jesus had done for him. A little later he says of Jesus that “He is a prophet.” Soon after, he speaks out against the religious authorities, insisting that “[t]his is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. ... It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything.” The man given sight sees Jesus truly.

Yet moments later, he acts truly. When Jesus seeks out this man to whom He had given sight, the healed man confesses that he sees Jesus as Lord, and worships Him.

This scene of the man with sight worshipping Jesus would make a beautiful end to today’s Gospel passage. It would be instructive for us who fail in seeing Jesus as our Good Shepherd, and who fail in paying Jesus due homage. But especially during Lent, we need to set our sights on yet another aspect of this narrative.

The Pharisees bear a double blindness. Not only are they spiritually blind, but they are also blind to the fact of their blindness. At least the man born blind knew he was blind! Yet the Pharisees, blind to their blindness, attempt to lead others spiritually in their zeal for the Jewish Law. In Matthew’s Gospel account, Jesus directly calls the Pharisees “blind guides”, and notes that “if

a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

The Pharisees’ double blindness is spiritually a “dark valley”. They walk through it without a capable guide. Their zeal for the Law stems from the blindness that the Lord pointed out to Samuel: they look at the appearances of legal observance. Their blindness prevents them from seeing Jesus as Lord and Shepherd: as one who “looks into the heart”.

But as you and I reflect on these blind guides, we each need to ask two questions. First, am I blind like the Pharisees? Second, what hope is there for someone suffering from such a double blindness? The answer to the second can help us honestly answer the first.

The spiritually blind person has no reason for hope in himself. Hope for the spiritually blind rests in God alone. Their hope—our hope—rests in the truth that our Lord is a Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd “looks into the heart”, and sees only darkness there. But He wills to lead the blind from darkness into light.

The Pharisees can see into neither their own blind hearts nor the heart of Jesus. But Jesus sees into the Pharisees’ hearts, and seeing their blindness, will, on Good Friday, pour forth from His Sacred Heart the light of Divine Mercy. But will the Pharisees turn toward His light, or avert their gaze from Him?

Taken from: <http://www.hprweb.com/2017/02/homilies-for-march-2017/>

Mass Intentions

Sunday March 26th

- 6:00 am For the special intention of Charlie Lopez; requested by the Lopez family.
9:30 am For the repose of the souls of Sam and Josephine Covernale; requested by Bernard Covernale.
11:00 am For the parish.
5:30 pm For the special intention of Nathan Yalcin; requested by the Yalcin family.

Monday March 27th

- 6:30 am For the special intention of Charlie Lopez; requested by Mary Bernadette Martinez and family.
12:10 pm For the repose of the soul of Juan Vasquez; requested by Sandy Guerra.

Tuesday March 28th

- 6:30 am For the repose of the souls of Vincent Nguyen and Maria Phan; requested by Kevin Nguyen.
12:10 pm For the repose of the souls of John and Florine Turlak; requested by Paul and Joyce Turlock.

Wednesday March 29th

- 6:30 am Honoring Infant Jesus of Prague for prayers answered; requested by Bernard Covernale.
12:10 pm For the repose of the soul of Delores Piche de Beltran; requested by Hayde Fuentes.

Thursday March 30th

- 6:30 am For the repose of the soul of Barbara Salesi; requested by Brunello Salesi.
12:10 pm For the repose of the soul of Sarah Monreal; requested by Jonathan Camara.

Friday March 31st

- 6:30 am For the repose of the soul of Silvestra Rodriguez; requested by Rosie Ortega.
12:10 pm For the protection of the unborn and end to the abortion slaughter.

Saturday April 1st

- 8:00 am Pro-Life Mass.
5:30 pm For the repose of the soul of James Sullivan; requested by Mark Sullivan.

Sunday April 2nd

- 6:00 am In Memory of Msgr. Anton Frank; requested by the parish.
9:30 am For the repose of the souls of Jose and Irene Cortina; requested by the Cortina Family.
11:00 am For the parish.
5:30 pm For the special intention of a benefactor; requested by the Szepeiniec family.

Annunciation Catholic Church

Sunday, March 26, 2017

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4th Sunday of

Lent

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Weekday Masses:

6:30 a.m. and 12:10 p.m., Mon.—Fri.

12:10 p.m. Tues. & Thurs.—Tridentine Mass

Weekend Mass:

8:00 a.m. Saturday—English Novus Ordo

Saturday Vigil and Sunday Masses:

5:30 p.m. Saturday Vigil Mass—English Novus Ordo

6:00 a.m. Sunday—English Novus Ordo

8:00 a.m. Sunday—Tridentine Mass

9:30 a.m. Sunday—English Novus Ordo

11:00 a.m. Sunday—Latin Novus Ordo

5:30 p.m. Sunday—English Novus Ordo

Sacrament of Penance (Confessions): 15 minutes before Mass